

Update from the Department of Early Learning September 2011

Director's note

More than 70,000 children in our state will start kindergarten this fall, and about 11,000 of those students will be part of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).

I cannot overstate how important this is for early learning in Washington: WaKIDS is a tool for connecting early learning and K-12 systems in our state, and for making sure every child has a strong start in school.

WaKIDS is a true partnership at every level: Parents partner with teachers in their child's education. Early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers partner to align practices and support smooth transitions into school. We at DEL partner with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to oversee WaKIDS, with a mix of state, federal and private funding.

I urge you to visit our new WaKIDS website to learn more about this program. It is simple, it is innovative, and it is going to change the way we prepare children for kindergarten in Washington: www.k12.wa.us/wakids

Bette Hyde, Director



Input on draft early learning guidelines begins Sept. 12

The draft early learning guidelines will be available for public input and advice from Sept. 12 through Oct. 27. DEL will post the draft guidelines online, along with background information and a brief survey.

DEL, in partnership with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington, convened a steering committee last year to redesign the guidelines (formerly known as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks). The goal is to redesign the guidelines to help ensure they are culturally relevant for Washington's communities, reflect current research about how children grow and learn, and link to the K-12 system.



A set of generally agreed-upon early learning guidelines are a resource for understanding how young children grow and develop, and what parents, early learning professionals and caregivers can do to support that growth in learning. They are an important part of a strong early learning system.

A link to the draft guidelines and supporting information will be online at www.del.wa.gov beginning Sept. 12.

Seasonal Child Care subsidy outreach continues throughout September

Eligible families will have opportunities this month for help signing up for Seasonal Child Care subsidy program. The program helps families pay for child care while parents work in agricultural settings.

Thursday, Sept. 8 in Sunnyside
Sunnyside CSO, 2010 Yakima Valley Highway
3 to 8 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 16 in Oroville
Gold Diggers, 1220 Ironwood
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 16 in Omak
North Omak Elementary School, 615 Oak St.
4 to 7 p.m.



What: Staff from DEL and the Department of Social and Health Services will be available to help families apply for child care, medical, food and cash benefits. The Mobile CSO units are one way to help families who have a hard time getting to their local community service office. To learn more about the Mobile CSO, visit www.dshs.wa.gov/mobileoffice

DEL previously has done outreach in Mount Vernon, Pasco, Skagit County, Mattawa, Wenatchee and Kennewick. To learn more about the Seasonal Child Care program, visit www.del.wa.gov/care/help/seasonal.aspx

School's Out Washington announces Quality Enhancement Grant

School's Out Washington is now accepting applications for its annual Quality Enhancement Grant, which helps improve the quality of school-age care programs licensed or certified by DEL.



Programs may apply for up to \$3,000, and may use the funds for a variety of projects that support improved program quality. Programs serving low-income families, children of color or children with special needs are strongly encouraged to apply and will get bonus points in the grant review process. Applications are due by Nov. 4.

Visit www.schoolsoutwashington.org to learn more and apply. The Quality Enhancement Grant is funded by DEL with federal Child Care and Development Fund dollars.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application released

The U.S. Department of Education released the application for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant on Aug. 23. RTT-ELC will provide \$500 million in state-level competitive grants to improve early learning and development programs. DEL is leading Washington’s application for the grant, which could bring up to \$60 million to our state over four years to support early learning for our children.



RTT-ELC is meant to help states raise the quality of early learning programs so that children start school ready to succeed. DEL Director Bette Hyde said, “I believe Washington is well positioned to be competitive in the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge. We are rolling out our kindergarten entry assessment program, [WaKIDS](#), this school year and we are taking our [Quality Rating and Improvement System](#) to 65 child care providers this year as we move toward statewide implementation.”

The grant application is due October 19 and the federal government will announce the awards in December.

DEL has created a webpage to keep the early learning community informed about RTT-ELC: www.del.wa.gov/government/racetotop/

Save the date! ECEAP celebrates 25 years

Help us celebrate 25 years of growing our future with the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)! Join DEL on Oct. 6 for a reception that will include stories from ECEAP providers, graduates and families.

When: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 6

Where: State Capitol Building, Columbia Room

What: A slideshow, guest speakers and light refreshments

[View the save the date online](#)

